



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
Jacksonville District

# NEWS RELEASE

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## New comment period opens on revised draft Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, has revised its draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that supports the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule. A 45-day public review and comment period begins July 6 and ends Aug. 20.

The environmental impact statement for the water control plan outlines in detail the proposed actions, other actions considered and probable environmental affects of all alternatives studied. All evaluated alternatives were based on managing the lake at a lower level than the current water regulation schedule.

The Corps' study process originally projected adoption of a new regulation schedule in January 2007. Following a series of public meetings last September, however, Jacksonville District Commander Col. Paul Grosskruger asked the interagency study team to revisit the proposed regulation schedule and fine-tune it to minimize impacts to the coastal estuaries. A second draft of the EIS was prepared and this draft is now available for public review. It is anticipated that implementation of the new regulation schedule will begin in November 2007.

"It may seem paradoxical to move ahead with a water management plan that maintains lower water levels in Lake Okeechobee while Florida remains in a drought. We must move forward, however,



because weather conditions in Florida are extreme and providing public safety requires that we plan now to help prevent future high lake levels from threatening the Herbert Hoover Dike,” Grosskruger said.

“Our goal is to adopt a plan based on the best engineering, science and water management analysis available, and the best plan for the entire greater Everglades region, including the Kissimmee River Basin, Lake Okeechobee, the coastal estuaries, the water conservation areas, Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. That’s an incredible amount of balancing, especially considering the diversity of needs, for people as well as for the environment,” he said.

Water managers are listening to the public’s concerns. “The public wants to see more water moving south. That’s what we all want to see and what the Everglades restoration program will ultimately provide,” said Pete Milam, project manager. “In the meantime, the amount of water we’re moving south is constrained until water storage and treatment components start coming on line in 2010.”

In the interim, the proposed plan provides for a higher level of safety to lake communities, improves Lake Okeechobee environmental conditions by managing the lake at lower elevations, and provides for less damaging releases to coastal estuaries.

Once water managers implement this proposed plan, they’ll begin developing a new system-wide operations plan that will take into account Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan projects, including Acceler8 project components planned for 2010 implementation. The Corps will also take Lake operations in consideration when the Herbert Hoover Dike is reinforced and has increased capacity to provide greater levels of protection sufficient to allow for additional water storage.

The Corps will host a series of public meetings in coming weeks. Dates and locations will be announced through local media and on the Jacksonville District web site, where further information on



the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule Study and Environmental Impact Statement may also be found at: <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/>. Click on Hot Topics at the very top of the page and then on Revised LORSS Draft EIS. For general questions, please contact the Corporate Communication Office at (904) 232-2236.

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